



U.S. Postal Service

In a Post Office, customers buy stamps, send money orders, and register packages to be mailed. Postal employees in the sorting room, right, sort the mail and put out-of-town letters and packages into bags.

## POST OFFICE

**POST OFFICE** is a place where mail is handled and postage stamps are sold. The term *post office*, or *postal service*, also refers to the government agency that provides and manages such mail services. The United States has about 32,000 post offices. They are operated by the U.S. Postal Service, an independent government agency with headquarters in Washington, D.C.

### How Your Letter Travels

Have you ever wondered what happens to a letter after you drop it into a corner mailbox? Let's take an imaginary trip with such a letter and learn what the U.S. Postal Service does with it. First of all, you address the letter to a friend of yours:

Miss Barbara Lynch  
7 Jordan Avenue  
Chicago, Illinois 60618

Then you put a stamp in the upper right-hand corner and your address in the upper left-hand corner of the envelope and drop it into the corner mailbox. If there is only one star on the mailbox, your letter will not be picked up after 5 P.M. Many cities offer a "night owl" collection service. Night owl mailboxes have two stars, and mail is collected from them as late as 8 P.M. Postal employees collect mail from the box by truck, put it into mailbags, and drive it to the post office.

**In the Post Office.** In large post offices, postal clerks empty the mailbags into an *edger-feeder* machine, which sorts letters according to envelope size. The machine then feeds the letters into another machine called a *facer-canceller*. This machine arranges the letters so they face the same way, with the stamps in the same position, and *cancels* (marks) the stamps so they cannot be used again. It also prints on the envelope the date, the words *U.S. Postal Service*, the state abbreviation, the first three digits of the post office's ZIP code, and either A.M. or

P.M. Then a letter-sorting machine, with a computer attachment, separates the letters according to their destination. In small post offices, letters are sorted, stacked, canceled, and separated by hand. See ZIP CODE.

**Your Letter Goes on Its Way.** All out-of-town mail is either put in trays or bundled before being placed into mailbags and transported by truck, airplane, or train. However, very few trains carry mail any more. Nearly all first-class mail going more than 100 miles (160 kilometers) travels by plane.

When the mail arrives in Chicago, it is rushed to the post office. Letters that have been ZIP-coded are machine-sorted according to local ZIP code areas. The local area is indicated by the last two digits of the code, such as 18 in 60618. Letters that have not been ZIP-coded must be processed by hand and might be delayed an extra day.

**The Postman.** When the carrier gets his own bundle of mail, he separates it according to the house numbers on the streets he serves. Your letter to Barbara is popped into a pigeonhole marked "7 Jordan Avenue."

Most carriers now drive instead of walking their routes. A carrier takes all the mail for his route, including packages, in his car. The carrier parks his car on the street and walks down the block. When he comes to Barbara's house, he drops your letter into her mailbox.

### Importance of the Postal System

Human progress and the postal system developed together. For centuries, man has used the postal system as his chief means of exchanging ideas with persons in distant places. Until the telegraph, telephone, radio, and television were invented, the postal system was about the only safe way of getting news from and giving news to persons in faraway places.

Try to imagine your community without postal serv-

ice. You would not often hear from your friends or relatives who live outside the community, because it would cost too much to send messages. No other means of communication is as inexpensive as the postal system. You would not be able to write to pen pals. You would have to buy magazines and newspapers at newsstands. It would be difficult to operate most businesses.

Furthermore, there might not even be a United States. This country probably could not have grown and remained united without postal communications.

### Post Office Services

**Postage Stamps.** The post office sells postage stamps to put on letters or packages. These stamps are proof that the senders have paid for sending their mail. About one out of four dollars of post office income comes from the sale of stamps. About 25 billion stamps are issued every year in the United States.

Stamps for ordinary surface mail are printed in the following denominations: 1¢ through 16¢, 18¢, 20¢, 21¢, 25¢, 30¢, 40¢, 50¢, \$1, and \$5. There also are airmail stamps of various denominations, such as 21¢, 25¢, 26¢, and 31¢.

At various times during the year, the U.S. Postal Service issues special stamps called *commemorative stamps*. Some such stamps honor distinguished persons who are dead. No living person may be shown on a United States postage stamp, although this is not true of stamps in other countries. Other commemorative stamps pay tribute to great historical events, to places of scenic beauty, or to particular industries or organizations. These commemorative stamps have the same values, and are used in the same way, as regular postage stamps.

**Stamped Envelopes.** The post office sells envelopes with postage printed on them for a small fee. Persons who use the mails often use stamped envelopes to save the time and labor of sticking stamps to envelopes.

**Postal Cards** also are sold by post offices. Postal cards have the postage printed on them, but cost only the value of the postage. Private companies make *post cards*. But these cards do not have a stamp on them.

**Metered Postage.** Companies that send out many pieces of mail often use a postage meter to speed up mailing. They lease a meter from an authorized manufacturer, and get a postal permit to use it. The company brings the meter to the post office and buys a certain amount of postage. A post office employee sets the meter for this amount. The meter contains printing dies which stamp envelopes used by the company. It also contains counters that show the company how much postage it has used and how much it has left.

**Precanceled Stamps** are used to reduce the time and labor cost of handling mail. They are canceled by the post office before the user puts them on envelopes for mailing. They can be purchased only at post offices where the user has a precancel permit.

**Presorted Mail.** The post office provides special reduced rates for some first-class mail that has been presorted by the sender. These rates apply to large mailings—at least 500 pieces—within the United States or its possessions. These items must meet certain post office specifications regarding size and weight. Before mailing the items, the sender must sort the pieces according to ZIP Code. Presorted rates also apply to some fourth-class mail. See PARCEL POST.

**Parcel Post** is the postal service for sending packages of certain sizes and weights through the mails. To qualify for parcel post service, a package must fall within certain size and weight limits. These vary according to the class of post office and the distance the parcel is being sent. See PARCEL POST.

**City Delivery.** The post office delivers mail free of charge to persons in most U.S. cities. Any town with at least 2,500 persons or at least 750 possible mail stops may have city mail delivery if it meets certain conditions. For example, the town must have sidewalks, house numbers, paved streets, and street signs.

**Rural Delivery.** People who live in the country receive mail without additional charges. There are about 34,000 rural routes that serve about 14½ million families. Rural carriers not only deliver mail, but also collect it, sell postage stamps, issue money orders, and register mail. See RURAL DELIVERY.

**General Delivery.** People can have their mail directed to General Delivery, if they are not sure what their address will be in a city. The post office will hold the mail for 10 days in most cases.

**Post Office Boxes** may be rented in post offices. They are located in post office lobbies. Individuals and companies often use them because they provide fast, convenient mail delivery. They also make mail available after regular post office hours.

**Collect on Delivery (C.O.D.)** permits a person to order something of value through the mail and pay for it when it arrives. Any mailable package or sealed letter may be sent C.O.D. if it has been ordered by the addressee. The person receiving the mail pays the price of the enclosure plus a money order fee and possibly the postage. The post office then sends the money to the company by postal money order.

**Registry.** When a person wants special protection for a letter or package, he or she can pay a small fee to the post office and have it registered. The person to whom the registered mail is sent must sign a postal receipt before the mail is delivered.

**Insurance.** Persons may insure packages for full value up to \$200. If the package is lost or damaged in the mails, the sender is paid the actual value of the item up to the amount of the insurance.

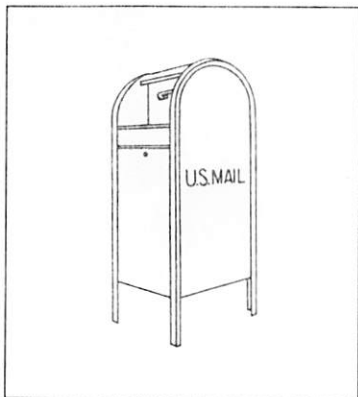
**Certificate of Mailing.** If a person wants proof that he or she mailed a letter or package, the person can pay a small fee at the time of mailing. The person fills out a certificate which the post office then certifies as legal proof that he or she mailed the letter or package.

**Certified Service.** When a person wants proof of delivery for items not having actual monetary value, he or she may pay 80 cents in addition to regular postage and receive certified service. The sender must fill out the certified coupon before mailing, as well as the return receipt card if one is desired. Post offices keep a record of certified-mail delivery for two years.

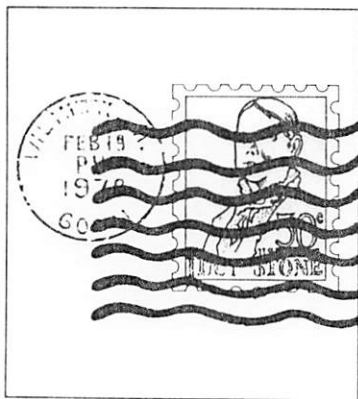
**Special Delivery.** For a fee of \$2 added to the regular postage, mail sent first-class and weighing less than 2 pounds (0.9 kilogram) will receive special treatment in the mails. This mail also will be delivered by a special messenger as soon as it arrives at a post office, instead of being held for regular delivery. Other classes of mail may also be sent special delivery.

## WHAT HAPPENS TO A LETTER

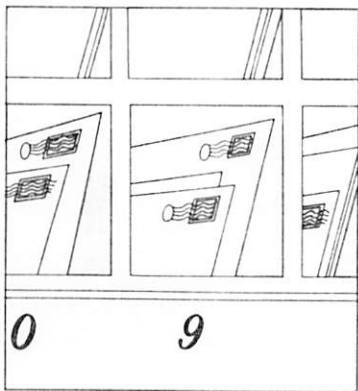
Mailing a letter to a friend is just the first step of a long, complicated process. By the time your friend gets the letter, it may have been handled by as many as 20 persons and 6 machines.



**A Mailbox** is marked with one or two stars. One star means that no mail is collected from the box after 5 P.M. Two stars show that mail is collected until 8 P.M. Postal employees collect mail from the boxes, put it into large bags, and take it by truck to a post office.



**At the Post Office**, postal clerks empty the mailbags onto moving belts and sort the letters according to envelope size. The letters then move through a *face-canceler* machine. This machine arranges the letters so they face one way and cancels the stamps so they cannot be used again.



**Letter-Sorting Machines** use a computer called a *ZIP mail translator* to group letters according to their destination. Operators punch the computer's keys to guide the letters into the correct bins. Letters are then bundled and put into mailbags.

WORLD BOOK Illustrations. Photos: U.S. Postal Service



**Large Trucks** carry the mail to an airport, where the bags are loaded onto airplanes. Since 1975, nearly all first-class mail going more than 100 miles (160 kilometers) has traveled by plane. Hardly any mail has traveled by train since the late 1960's.



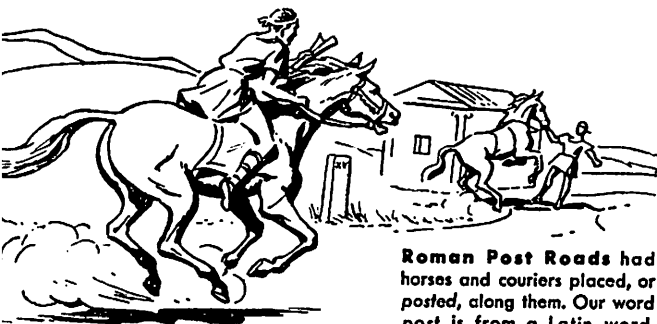
**At the Destination Airport**, trucks take the mailbags to a post office. There, machines sort the mail according to local ZIP code areas. Each postman receives a load of mail for the area he serves. He sorts the letters and packages according to the addresses on his route.



WORLD BOOK Illustrations; photos: Ray Ellis, Rapho Guillumette; U.S. Postal Service

**Before Delivering the Mail**, the mailman makes a bundle of the items headed for each block along his route. Most mailmen use an automobile so they can take the entire load at one time. The carrier parks in each block and makes his deliveries on foot.





**Roman Post Roads** had horses and couriers placed, or posted, along them. Our word *post* is from a Latin word, *positum*, meaning to place.

**Express Mail.** This service provides guaranteed delivery by courier on a contract basis for large-volume mailers. It also provides overnight delivery for the general public within the downtown areas of more than 400 cities, with a money-back guarantee.

**Mailgram.** A combination letter-telegram can be sent by wire and delivered by letter carrier. This service is less expensive than a telegram and faster than a letter. Over 75,000 mailgrams are sent daily.

**Special Handling.** A person may pay a small fee to have fourth-class mail sent by special handling. This means that a package will be transported between post offices along with first-class mail.

**Dead-Mail Office.** Mail that cannot be delivered, or returned, goes to one of the branches of the Dead-Mail Office. Money sent in letters that cannot be delivered is turned over to the post office. At regular intervals there is a sale of the contents of "dead" packages. Funds from such sales also go to the Postal Service. See DEAD-MAIL OFFICE.

**Money Order.** Post offices sell money orders to provide a safe, convenient way to send money through the mails. See MONEY ORDER.

**Nonpostal Stamps.** Stamps other than those used for postage, such as migratory bird stamps attached to hunting licenses, may be bought in post offices.

**Other Services.** Post offices serve as headquarters for the registration of aliens. They also accept passport applications and give information to the public regarding civil service employment.

**Postal Inspection.** Over 1,500 postal inspectors safeguard and improve postal services. Some solve administrative problems. They investigate post office personnel and routines, and suggest ways of improving services. Other inspectors deal with crimes involving the mails. They investigate the mailing of explosives, firearms, and poisons; mail thefts; post office burglaries; the use of the mails to defraud; and forged money orders.

**Highway Transportation Contracts,** formerly called *Star Route Service*, provide over-the-road transportation of mail between post offices. The mail is usually carried in trucks. Some contracts provide for the delivery and collection of mail in roadside mailboxes for families living along the route. These carriers are not government employees. They work under contract with the postal transportation service.

### Postal Service Careers

The United States Postal Service offers careers that may be divided into two groups. The larger group includes jobs that deal directly with the gathering, dis-

tribution, and delivery of mail. This group covers about 637,000 workers. The second group includes over 42,000 persons. They perform jobs that are similar to jobs found in many other businesses.

Postal field workers are not required to meet any specific educational requirements, although persons with at least a high school education are preferred. Postal workers must pass a Postal Service examination before being hired. The examination measures reading and vocabulary skills and the ability to memorize names and addresses. Application forms are available at post offices. A person may also write the local postmaster for forms.

**Careers in Positions Handling Direct Mail.** More than half of all postal employees hold positions as regular *full-time mail carriers*, and *post office clerks*. Carriers deliver mail everywhere. Postal clerks handle a variety of jobs. Many deal directly with the public at stamp, parcel post, delivery, and money order windows. Others sort and route mail and tabulate money order receipts. *Substitute mail carriers* and *substitute post office clerks* work in the place of absent postal workers or take on extra duties.

*Mail handlers* in large post offices do the heavy work of handling mailbags. *Postal inspectors* investigate violations of postal regulations, and improve post office services. *Superintendents* supervise and direct workers. *Postmasters* are in charge of all personnel and operations in their post offices.

**Careers in Supplementary Mail Service Jobs.** *Mechanics* keep mail trucks in good condition. *Engineers* and *janitors* care for post office buildings. *Security guards* protect postal buildings and properties. *Typists*, *accountants*, *auditors*, and *machine operators* help to keep records of postal operations. *Drivers*, *dispatchers*, and *route supervisors* handle motor-unit transfers of mail.

### History

**Early Years.** As long ago as 3000 B.C., fast couriers, or runners, memorized messages and carried them for their rulers. Only rulers used this early postal system. There was no demand for a general postal service, because few people could read or write. Early "letters" were carved on clay or bronze. Later, they were carved on bone or wood, and protected by a wax coating. Still later, they were written on the skins of animals (parchment), or on materials that were made from vegetable matter (papyrus).

Herodotus, the Greek historian (484?-424? B.C.), wrote about the Persian postal system of 500 B.C. in these words: "... neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night stays these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds." This quotation is inscribed on the front of the General Post Office in New York City.

Caesar Augustus (63 B.C.-A.D. 14), the first Roman emperor, created the first "modern" postal system. He needed swift communications to hold his empire together, and built fine roads for his messengers.

When the Roman Empire was destroyed, the postal system it created was destroyed also. There was not much communication, on an organized scale, between peoples in Europe until the early 1300's.

The writings of Marco Polo (1254-1324?) about the China of Kublai Khan (1216-1294) describe a

## CLASSES OF MAIL AND POSTAGE RATES

**First Class.** Letters, postal cards, and all other material wholly or partly in writing, or sealed against inspection.

*Mail within United States and possessions\* and to Canada and Mexico:*

Letters and packages

First ounce\* ..... 15¢

Each additional ounce or fraction thereof up

to 12 ounces ..... 13¢

Postal cards (each) ..... 10¢

*Surface mail to all other countries:*

Letters and packages (one ounce or fraction

thereof) ..... 20¢

Postal cards (each) ..... 14¢

*Airmail to Central America, Caribbean islands, the Bahamas, Bermuda, Colombia, St. Pierre and Miquelon, and Venezuela:*

Letters and letter packages (per half ounce up

to and including 2 ounces) ..... 25¢

Each additional half ounce\*\* ..... 21¢

Postal cards (each) ..... 21¢

*Airmail to all other countries††:*

Letters and letter packages (per half ounce up

to and including 2 ounces) ..... 31¢

Each additional half ounce\*\* ..... 26¢

Postal cards (each) ..... 21¢

Air-letter sheets (each) ..... 22¢

**Second Class.** Newspapers and periodicals.

*For the general public:* 10¢ for the first 2 ounces or fraction thereof, and 6¢ for each additional ounce or fraction thereof. Fourth-class rates apply if lower.

*For publishers:* rates vary according to (1) whether the item is printed in the county it is mailed in; (2) the percentage of reading and advertising matter; (3) the item's weight; and (4) countries to which it may be sent.

**Third Class.** Any mail that weighs less than 16 ounces that is not included in first or second class.

*Single piece rates:*

First 2 ounces or fraction thereof ..... 20¢

Next 2 ounces or fraction thereof ..... 20¢

Each additional 2 ounces or fraction thereof ..... 13¢

*Bulk rates:*

Books and catalogs having at least 24 pages, 22 of which are printed; seeds; plants; etc. (per pound or fraction thereof) ..... 36¢

All other printed matter and merchandise (per

pound or fraction thereof) ..... 41¢

Minimum rate per piece ..... 8.4¢

Lower rates apply to bulk mailings by authorized nonprofit organizations.

*Rate for keys and identification cards without cover:*

First 2 ounces or fraction thereof ..... 32¢

Each additional 2 ounces or fraction thereof ..... 18¢

**Fourth Class.** Any matter that weighs 16 ounces or more that is not included in first or second class.

\*Special rates applicable to presorted mailings of 500 pieces or more.

\*\*Rates for heavier mail vary according to weight and destination.

††Rates for heavier mail vary according to weight.

††Excludes United States possessions, Canada, and Mexico.



The Inca maintained regular mail service to much of their empire. This map shows how roads linked the capital at Cusco, in what is now Peru, with other Inca cities. Runners were stationed every few miles along the roads to relay messages and parcels. Mail sometimes traveled 150 miles (240 km.) in a day.



WORLD BOOK MAP

In 1683, Charles II of Great Britain (1630-1685) started the London Penny Post. Letters could be mailed anywhere within London for a penny. Outside the city, bad roads, slow horses, and indifferent messengers delayed mail delivery.

In Great Britain in 1836, Rowland Hill (1795-1879) wrote a pamphlet suggesting a cheap, uniform rate for letters, the present-day envelope, and adhesive postage stamps. Previously, postmasters had written "Paid" on the outside of a sealed letter before it was sent. Or, if payment had not been made in advance, the money was collected from the person receiving the mail. Hill's reforms were, for the most part, adopted in Great Britain in 1840. The first postage stamps in the world were issued in Britain on May 6, 1840.

**American Colonial Days.** The first indication of an official American postal system appeared in 1639. In that year, the Massachusetts colony gave Richard Fairbanks permission to receive and dispatch ship mail at his home in Boston. He was paid one cent for every letter he handled. The Boston Post Road was so named because of the postal system begun along it in 1673.

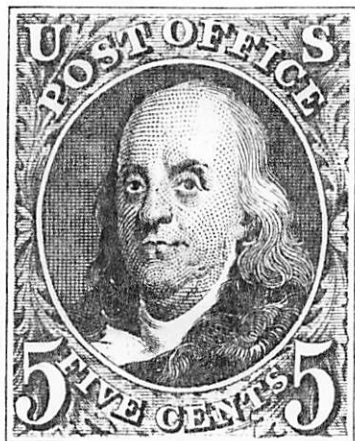
In 1692, King William III of Great Britain gave Thomas Neale the monopoly on all postal services in the colonies. The colonists disliked this postal system, because the authorities could open their mail to see if it contained evidence of disloyalty to the king. Postage was high, and, to the colonists, it represented a tax.

In 1774, a Baltimore journalist named William Goddard (1740-1817) established a private postal system to compete with the British one. The Continental Congress took over Goddard's system in 1775, and it eventually became what is now the U.S. Postal Service.

Benjamin Franklin was the first great name in American postal service. He served as co-deputy postmaster general of the colonies from 1753 to 1774. The Second Continental Congress appointed him the first American

postal system of messengers and horses. China then had 10,000 postal stations. The Aztec in Mexico and Central America had a parcel post system to distribute fresh fish among their villages in the 1200's.

**The Beginnings of Public Mails.** During the 1400's, King Edward IV of England (1442-1483) set up a system of post houses which were primarily for carrying official mail. There is convincing evidence that private persons also used the early posts. Under Henry VIII (1491-1547), an Englishman named Sir Brian Tuke was made the first "Master of the Posts." Under Tuke, the service became more available to ordinary citizens.



U.S. Postal Service

Series of 1847—Portrait of Franklin

**Benjamin Franklin** became the first American postmaster general in 1775. He made the postal system self-supporting, and laid the basis for the Dead-Mail Office.



**First Adhesive Postage Stamps** were used in 1847. Before this time, postmasters wrote "Paid" on envelopes.



**First Street Mailboxes** appeared in 1858. It no longer was necessary to go to the post office to mail letters.

postmaster general in 1775. See **FRANKLIN, BENJAMIN** (Civic Leader).

**In the 1700's and 1800's.** When the United States was being formed, George Washington insisted on developing an efficient mail service, and personally helped in surveying post routes to speed the mails.

In 1782, the Congress of the Confederation guaranteed the mail service as a symbol of freedom by decreeing that private letters could not be opened or delayed by postal authorities. Before, the mail service had been chiefly for government use, and private citizens who used it ran the risk of having their mail opened and read.

In 1789, Samuel Osgood became the first postmaster general to serve under the U.S. Constitution. At that time, the nation had 75 post offices and fewer than 2,000 miles (3,200 kilometers) of post roads.

The postmaster general became a member of the President's Cabinet in 1829. Adhesive postage stamps were introduced in the United States in 1847. Registry service began in 1855.

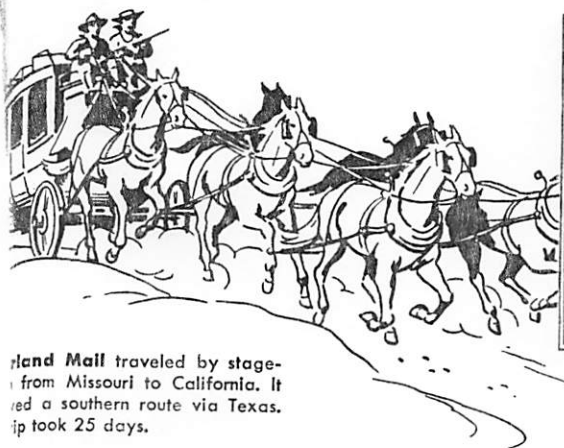
The pony express was perhaps the most colorful development in the history of United States mail. For 18 months in 1860 and 1861, pony express riders carried mail from St. Joseph, Mo., to Sacramento, Calif. These daring riders reduced the time for delivering mail from the East Coast to the West Coast from 24 days to about 10 days. The service ended with completion of the transcontinental telegraph in 1861. See **PONY EXPRESS**.

In 1863, letters were first carried free of charge to homes and businesses. The service started in 49 cities, and soon spread throughout the nation. In 1864, railway post offices started operating. Clerks sorted mail

#### IMPORTANT DATES IN POSTAL HISTORY

- |  |  |
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| <p><b>1516</b> First successful public postal system was established between Vienna and Berlin.</p> <p><b>1683</b> London Penny Post began operating in England.</p> <p><b>1692</b> Andrew Hamilton was appointed deputy postmaster general to help Thomas Neale establish a colonial postal system.</p> <p><b>1775</b> Benjamin Franklin was appointed the first postmaster general under the Continental Congress.</p> <p><b>1789</b> Samuel Osgood was appointed the first postmaster general under the United States Constitution.</p> <p><b>1829</b> Postmaster general became a Cabinet post.</p> <p><b>1840</b> Great Britain issued the first postage stamps.</p> <p><b>1847</b> United States introduced postage stamps.</p> <p><b>1855</b> Registry service was established.</p> <p><b>1858</b> Street letter boxes were introduced.</p> <p><b>1860</b> Pony express service was established between St. Joseph, Mo., and Sacramento, Calif.</p> <p><b>1863</b> Free city delivery was begun, and a uniform letter rate was set up.</p> <p><b>1864</b> Railway post office service was begun, and the money order system was established.</p> <p><b>1869</b> Austria became the first country to use postal cards.</p> <p><b>1874</b> Universal Postal Union was formed in Bern, Switzerland, to help in the exchange of mail between countries.</p> | <p><b>1885</b> Special delivery service became available.</p> <p><b>1896</b> Rural Free Delivery service began.</p> <p><b>1913</b> Parcel post, postal insurance, and collect on delivery services were established.</p> <p><b>1918</b> First regular continuous airmail route was established—between New York City and Washington, D.C.</p> <p><b>1941</b> Highway post office service began.</p> <p><b>1943</b> Postal delivery zone system was introduced.</p> <p><b>1955</b> Certified service was established.</p> <p><b>1963</b> Zoning Improvement Plan (ZIP) service began operation.</p> <p><b>1969</b> British postal system became a public, profit-making corporation.</p> <p><b>1970</b> Postal workers carried out the first large-scale work stoppage against the U.S. postal system.</p> <p><b>1971</b> The United States Postal Service, an independent agency, replaced the Post Office Department.</p> <p><b>1971</b> Postal unions and the U.S. Postal Service signed the first federal labor contract achieved through collective bargaining.</p> <p><b>1974</b> The first mailgram transmitted by satellite was sent from New York City to Los Angeles.</p> <p><b>1977</b> Railway post office service ended.</p> |
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# UNITED STATES MAIL

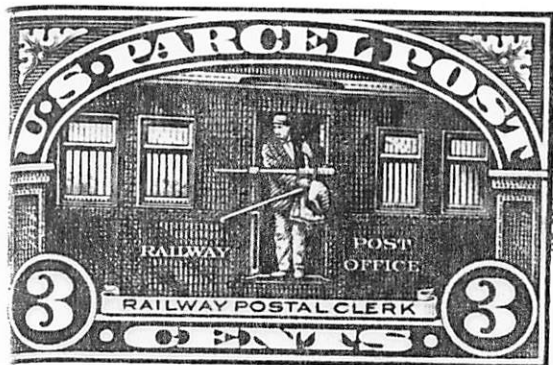


land Mail traveled by stage-  
from Missouri to California. It  
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ip took 25 days.



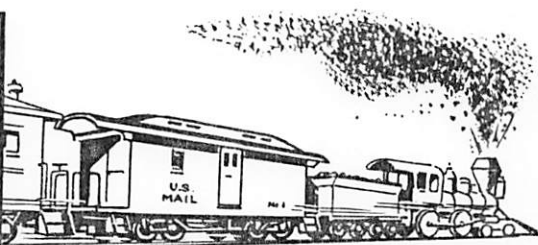
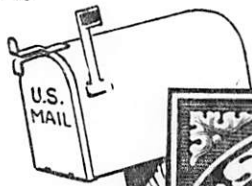
*Pony Express Commemorative Stamp—Issue of 1940*

**Pony Express Riders** carried U.S. mail between St. Joseph, Mo., and Sacramento, Calif. They rode almost 2,000 miles (3,200 kilometers) in about 8 days.

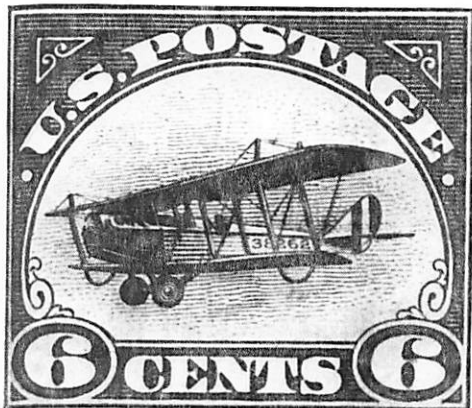


*Parcel Post Stamp—Issue of 1912-13*

**Rural Free Delivery** started in 1896. In the first week, patrons received 214 letters, 290 papers, 33 postal cards, and 2 packages, and sent 18 letters and 2 packages.

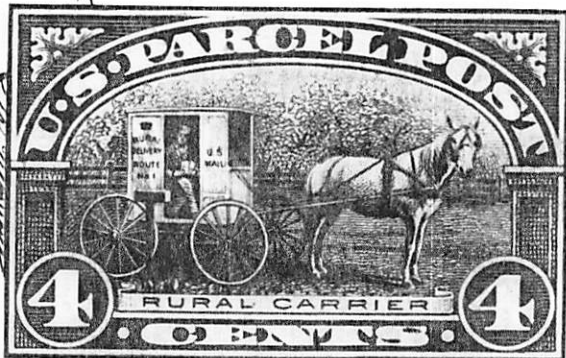


**First Railway Mail Cars** began operating in 1864. The first official test run was made August 28, between Chicago and Clinton, Iowa.



U.S. Postal Service

*Airmail Stamp—Issue of 1918*



*Parcel Post Stamp—Issue of 1912-13*

**First Regular Airmail Service** in the world was inaugurated in 1918. The flight was between Washington, D.C., and New York City.



## POST OFFICE

in special cars as the train moved across country. In small towns, mail sacks were picked up by catcher arms on the cars while the train was moving. The sacks were tossed from the moving train to the platform. Railway post office service ended in 1977. In 1864, the post office began selling money orders.

The U.S. Post Office began selling postal cards in 1873. The Universal Postal Union was founded in 1874 to improve international service. In 1885, special-delivery service was begun in America. The first Rural Free Delivery routes began in 1896 in West Virginia.

**In the 1900's.** In 1913, parcel post and C.O.D. services were introduced. By 1918, airplanes carried mail regularly (see AIRMAIL). In 1925, special handling service was made available.

In several U.S. cities, helicopters shuttle mail from the airport to the main post office, and from there to suburbs. The first such flight was in Los Angeles in 1947. Air parcel post service began in 1948. In 1953, the post office began flying regular first-class mail between certain cities.

Since 1900, the number of post offices in the United States has decreased. Modern rural carrier service, traveling on improved roads, has reduced the need for post offices in many small communities. In 1901, there were 76,945 post offices in the United States. Today there are about 30,000 United States post offices. They handle about 92 billion pieces of mail a year, almost half the total handled by the rest of the world's post offices. In the 1960's, many post offices began using automated mail-handling equipment.

In 1963, the post office also began the *Zoning Improvement Plan (ZIP)*, a fast, new system of mail sorting and distribution. Mailers use five-number *ZIP codes* in addresses on letters and packages. The numbers stand for postal regions, cities, and sections of large cities.

**Recent Developments.** The U.S. Postal Service, an independent agency, replaced the Post Office Department in 1971. When the Postal Service was created, it was expected to deliver mail more efficiently and become self-supporting by the mid-1980's. Instead, the agency reported annual deficits every year, chiefly because of rising labor costs.

The agency's financial problems grew despite a series of increases in postal rates. For example, the cost of mailing a first-class letter rose from 6¢ to 8¢ in May 1971, from 8¢ to 10¢ in March 1974, from 10¢ to 13¢ in December 1975, and from 13¢ to 15¢ in May 1978. To cut costs, the Postal Service proposed to cut mail delivery one day a week, to close a number of rural post offices, and to reduce other services. But many people protested the frequent rate increases and the proposed cutbacks in service. Some critics of the agency suggested that the government allow private firms to compete in mail delivery. Others proposed to put the independent Postal Service back under congressional control.

By law, only the U.S. Postal Service may deliver first-class mail, but private firms may handle other types. Rising postal rates brought a growth in private mail deliveries during the 1970's. Many firms specialized in mass delivery of advertising circulars, catalogs, magazines, and samples. Some electric power, gas, and water companies began to distribute their own bills.

Private parcel services took over much of the parcel post business formerly handled by the Postal Service.

In the mid-1970's, the agency established the National Bulk Mail System to deliver such items as magazines and parcels. Under this system, all bulk mail goes to one of 21 automated centers for processing. In 1974, the first mailgram transmitted by satellite was sent at the speed of light from New York City to Los Angeles.

### Canadian Postal System

The Canada Post Office has over 8,500 post offices and 50,000 employees. About 12,000 letter carriers serve Canadian cities and towns. The post office also operates a 145,000-mile (233,400-kilometer) network of rural mail delivery routes.

The Canada Post Office has modernized and diversified its services to meet the needs of its growing population, especially in urban areas. In 1970, its world-wide money order system was computerized. *Assured mail delivery*, which guarantees delivery on the next delivery day throughout the country, started in 1971 in Toronto. Also in 1971, Canada became the first country to fly all first-class mail weighing up to 8 ounces (227 grams) addressed to people in foreign countries.

By 1973, a Postal Code was in use throughout Canada. Unlike the U.S. ZIP Code, the Canadian Postal Code uses a letter-number combination in the form *ANA NAN*. The *A's* represent letters of the alphabet, and the *N's* represent numbers. The first three characters designate a large postal area. The next three narrow the destination, in some cases making it possible to even identify a specific building.

The Canada Post has developed a number of new services specially tailored for its customers' needs. A service called *Postpak* gives companies special rates for bulk shipment of their products in containers that eliminate some of the sorting steps. Another service, called *Telepost*, allows communications to be sent by wire and delivered by letter carrier.

Critically reviewed by  
the CANADA POST OFFICE and the U.S. POSTAL SERVICE

### Related Articles in WORLD BOOK include:

Airmail	Parcel Post
Dead-Mail Office	Postal Card
Engraving and Printing,	Postal Service, U.S.
Bureau of	Postal Union, Universal
Franking and Penalty	Rural Delivery
Privileges	Stamp
Franklin, Benjamin	Stamp Collecting
Mail-Order Business	ZIP Code
Money Order	

### Outline

- I. How Your Letter Travels
  - A. In the Post Office
  - B. Your Letter Goes on Its Way
- II. Importance of the Postal System
- III. Post Office Services
  - A. Postage Stamps
  - B. Stamped Envelopes
  - C. Postal Cards
  - D. Metered Postage
  - E. Precanceled Stamps
  - F. Presorted Mail
  - G. Parcel Post
  - H. City Delivery
  - I. Rural Free Delivery
  - J. General Delivery
  - K. Post Office Boxes
  - L. Collect on Delivery (C.O.D.)
  - M. Registry
  - N. Insurance
  - O. Certificate of Mailing
  - P. Certified Service
  - Q. Special Delivery
  - R. Express Mail
  - S. Mailgram
  - T. Special Handling
- C. The Postman

- |                     |                                     |
|---------------------|-------------------------------------|
| U. Dead-Mail Office | X. Other Services                   |
| V. Money Order      | Y. Postal Inspection                |
| W. Nonpostal Stamps | Z. Highway Transportation Contracts |

- IV. Postal Service Careers  
V. History  
VI. Canadian Postal System

#### Questions

- What is postage?  
When did regular airmail service go into operation?  
Why should ZIP codes be given in addresses?  
How does a *post card* differ from a *postal card*?  
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**POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT.** See **POSTAL SERVICE, UNITED STATES.**

**POSTAGE AND POSTAGE STAMP.** See **POST OFFICE (Postage Stamps); STAMP; STAMP COLLECTING.**

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The Postal Service is one of the world's largest organizations. The agency operates about 30,000 post offices in the United States and its possessions. It employs more than 670,000 persons and has an annual budget of more than \$14 billion.

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## POSTAL SERVICE, UNITED STATES

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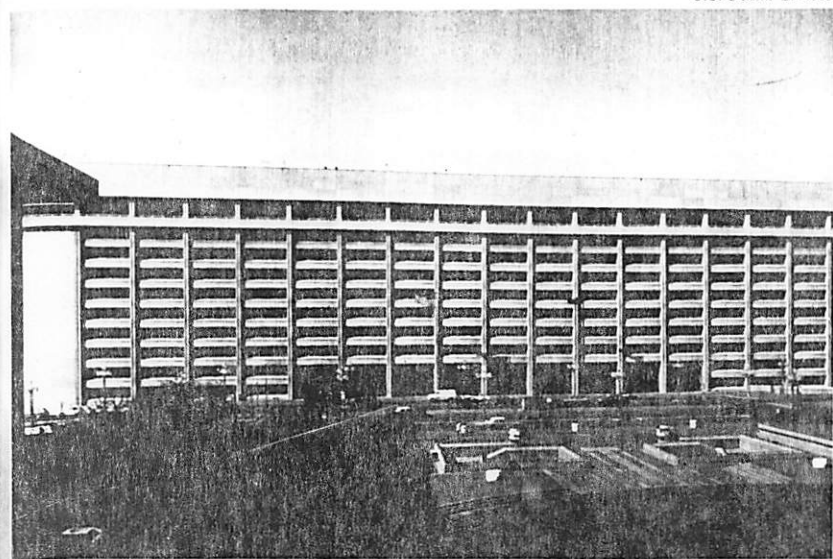
**Organization.** An 11-member Board of Governors directs the Postal Service. Nine of the members are appointed by the President, with the advice and consent of the U.S. Senate. These members appoint the postmaster general, who becomes the 10th member of the board and serves as the chief executive officer of the Postal Service. These 10 members, in turn, appoint the deputy postmaster general, who becomes the 11th member of the board and is the postmaster general's chief assistant. The postmaster general and the deputy are responsible for the day-to-day operations of the agency.

The Postal Service also includes an independent five-member Postal Rate Commission. The members are appointed by the President. They recommend postal rates and classifications for adoption by the Board of Governors.

Postal workers are part of a separate postal career service within the federal government. The Postal Service sets its own personnel procedures, and political recommendations for appointments and promotions are prohibited.

**Financing.** The U.S. Postal Service is authorized to borrow up to \$10 billion from the general public. The Department of the Treasury may be required to purchase postal obligations. The Postal Service also receives funds that are financed by general taxes. When the agency was created, it was expected to become self-supporting by the mid-1980's. Instead, the Postal Service experienced severe financial difficulties. For more information on the financial problems of the agency, see **POST OFFICE (Recent Developments).**

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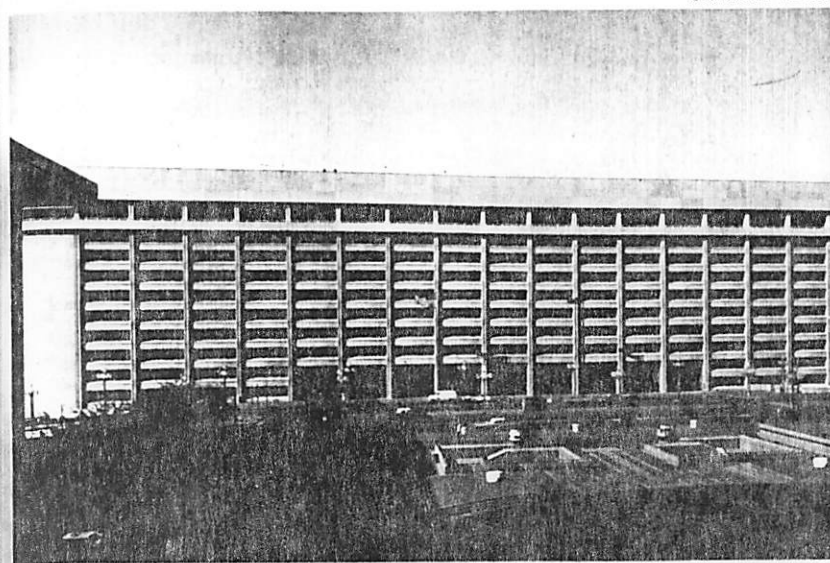
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Designing posters is helpful in training art students to express ideas clearly and forcefully. **RICHARD S. COYNE**

See also **ADVERTISING**; **COMMERCIAL ART**; **LETTERING**.

**POSTIMPRESSIONISM.** See **IMPRESSIONISM**.

**POSTMASTER GENERAL.** See **POSTAL SERVICE**, **UNITED STATES**.

**POSTULATE.** See **GEOMETRY** (Assumptions).

**POSTURE** is the position of a person's body and the way he sits or stands. It is judged to be *good*, *normal*, or *bad* by the position of the head, chest, trunk, pelvis, knees, and feet.

In standing posture, a person should:

1. Hold the head erect but balanced without tension.
2. Hold the chest up and slightly forward, but free to breathe.
3. Hold the shoulders well back, but not hunched or strained backward.
4. Let the arms hang naturally by the sides.
5. Hold the abdomen somewhat flat, or at least not allow it to sag forward. The back will take care of itself if this is done.
6. Hold the knees balanced, neither overstretched nor bent.

7. Place the feet naturally, with the body weight slightly over the balls of the feet and on the outside edges of the feet. The inside arches should be held up.



Swiss Federal Railroads

The Universal Postal Union is symbolized in Bern, Switzerland, by a statue showing messengers circling the world.

national laws. However, some provisions are optional.

The *Executive Council* is a permanent body that handles UPU affairs between congresses. It consists of 31 members, elected on the basis of geographical representation. The *Consultative Council on Postal Studies* conducts technical research in international postal matters. The *International Bureau* is the UPU's permanent secretariat. It may also act as an information center and clearinghouse for settling UPU's financial accounts.

The first international postal congress was held by 22 countries in 1874 in Bern, Switzerland. The first postal convention went into effect in 1875. The UPU received its present name in 1878 at the second postal congress. It became a specialized agency of the United Nations in 1947. The UPU's permanent headquarters is in Bern.

Critically reviewed by the **UNIVERSAL POSTAL UNION**

**POSTAL ZONE.** See **PARCEL POST** (Parcel Post Rates).

**POSTER** is a simple, bold advertisement. It is designed to promote a product, a service, a name, or an idea. Most posters are large sheets of printed paper displayed where many people are likely to see them.

The success of a poster depends on its simplicity. Most people are either riding or walking when they see a poster, so it must catch their attention and get its message across quickly. Some of the most successful posters, such as *billboards*, use as little as one word or one picture to relay their message. Some posters serve simply as a reminder of a well-known product. Other advertising in magazines, newspapers, or on television offers more detailed information on the product.

The poster has been a means of communication for hundreds of years. It started with handbills and signboards in Europe. In the late 1800's, such painters as Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec and Alphonse Mucha created posters and supervised their reproduction on lithograph stones. Surviving copies of these posters are now highly valued by art collectors and museums.



Mt. Fuji in Winter

A. H. H. H.

# Japan

Japan. Another World to Discover.

**JNTO**  
JAPAN NATIONAL TOURIST ORGANIZATION

Japan National Tourist Organization

A Japanese Poster encourages tourists to visit Japan by showing Mount Fuji, one of the country's scenic attractions.